Department of Community Services

Business Plan

Fiscal Year 2005-06

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER AND DEPUTY MINISTER 1

2 PLANNING CONTEXT 1

2.1 KEY DRIVERS 1
2.2 OPPORTUNITIES 4

3 MISSION 6

4 STRATEGIC GOALS 6

5 CORE BUSINESS AREAS 7

5.1 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE 8
5.2 HOUSING SERVICES 8
5.3 FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES 9
5.4 SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 9
5.5 CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES 10

6 PRIORITIES 2005-06 10

6.1 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT & INCOME ASSISTANCE (ESIA) 10
6.1.1 Standardized Core Training Program 10
6.1.2 Complete Employment Support Services Evaluation 11
6.1.3 Income Assistance Personal Allowance Rate 11
6.2 HOUSING SERVICES 11
6.2.1 Continue Implementation of the Affordable Housing Program 11
6.3 FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES 12
6.3.1 Early Childhood Development Initiative 12
6.3.2 Early Learning and Child Care 13
6.3.3 Child Care Subsidy Review 13
6.3.4 Adoption Re-Design 14
6.3.5 Volunteer Initiative 14
6.3.6 Child Welfare - Placement Services Re-Design 14
6.4 SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 15
6.4.1 Community Supports for Adults Renewal Project 15
6.4.2 Review of Adult Day Programs 16
6.4.3 Wheel Chair Recycling Demonstration Project 16
6.5 CORPORATE INITIATIVES 16
6.5.1 Social Policy Framework 17
6.5.2 Integrated Case Management 17
6.5.3 Client Service Improvement 17
6.5.4 Human Resources 18
6.5.5 French Lanuage Initiative 19

7 BUDGET CONTEXT 20

OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES 21

1 MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER AND DEPUTY MINISTER

It is with great pleasure that we present the Department of Community Services 2005-2006 Business Plan.

The Business Plan provides us with a road map for the coming year and acts as our guide for activities to improve services for Nova Scotians. It also ensures that we are accountable for accomplishing the activities we plan for every year.

This will be a busy year in all program areas. In addition to offering our on-going programs and services, several initiatives are planned to help make sure we are addressing any gaps in our social safety net.

A priority for the Employment Support and Income Assistance Division will be a review of employment support services. The range of employment support services and how they are provided will be examined with the goal of ensuring appropriate and responsive services are available to meet the changing needs of people working toward increased self-sufficiency.

Housing Services will continue implementation of the Affordable Housing Program. This program has resulted in new and renovated housing in Nova Scotia, and more activity will result during the second phase of this program.

The Family and Children's Services Division will be focusing on planning and implementation of the federal/provincial/territorial 2005 Early Learning and Child Care Agreement which will see significant investments and enhanced supports for children and families. We will also be examining ways to improve adoption services to help ensure children in Nova Scotia now waiting for families are adopted as soon as possible.

We will also continue implementation of new programs resulting from the Community Supports for Adults Renewal Project. Three new and expanded programs identified for action during the consultation and planning phases are currently in various stages of implementation.

This is just a snap shot of the many activities planned for next year. In addition to dedicated staff, we are fortunate to have many partners in the community to participate in this work. Together, we look forward to a busy and productive year.

David M. Morse
Minister

Marian F.Tyson, Q.C.
Deputy Minister

2 PLANNING CONTEXT

The Department of Community Services delivers a wide range of social services to Nova Scotians in need under a broad legislative mandate. These services form a secure and predictable social safety net for Nova Scotians and contribute to better futures for children and families, persons with disabilities, seniors, and communities.

2.1 KEY DRIVERS

The social service system operates in a very dynamic social and economic environment. An aging population, a persistently high incidence of disability, rural/urban population shift, regional disparities in economic activity, incidence of low-incomes, and an aging housing stock are some of the trends that will likely impact the demand for social services in 2005-06. Adding to the challenge of managing demand against this back-drop, is the increasing complexity of need coupled with growing public expectations.

Aging Population

Nova Scotia's population is aging. Statistics Canada projections indicate this trend is going to continue for the next couple decades. In the 18 to 24 years of age category, Nova Scotia experienced a net loss of over 7,100 individuals between 1992 and 2002[1]. By 2016, almost 40% of Nova Scotia's population will be over the age of 50[2]. An aging population will present many challenges for the social service system. Aging is often accompanied by changes in employment, income, housing needs, family circumstances or health status. For those people in low-to-moderate income situations, these changes can result in periods of income insecurity, putting pressure on the income assistance system. An age profile of the current income assistance caseload shows an increasingly upward trend in the number of clients over the age of 45.

High Incidence of Disability – Young Children the Exception

A related challenge for the social service system is the high incidence of disability. Nova Scotians consistently report a higher incidence of disability than other Canadians[3]. 17.1% in Nova Scotia compared to the national average of 12.4%. In 2001, 14.4% of the population in Nova Scotia aged 15 to 64 reported some level of disability, compared to the Canadian average of 9.9%. People whose disability limits their ability to work are, according to Statistics Canada, among the persistent low-income groups. In 2004-05, approximately 53% of the Income

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[1] Nova Scotia Department Finance, Statistics Canada, "Annual Demographic Statistics", Catalogue # 91-213-XPB

[2] Nova Scotia Department of Finance, Population Projections based on 1996 census of Population

[3] Cited in *Persons with Disabilities in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Report 2004*. Disabled Persons Commission. Based on Participation Activity Limitations (PALS) Survey, 2001.

Assistance caseload have some level of disability. A positive trend is seen in children under the age of four, where the disability rate is lower in Nova Scotia than the rest of Canada, 1.3% in Nova Scotia compared with 1.6% for Canada.

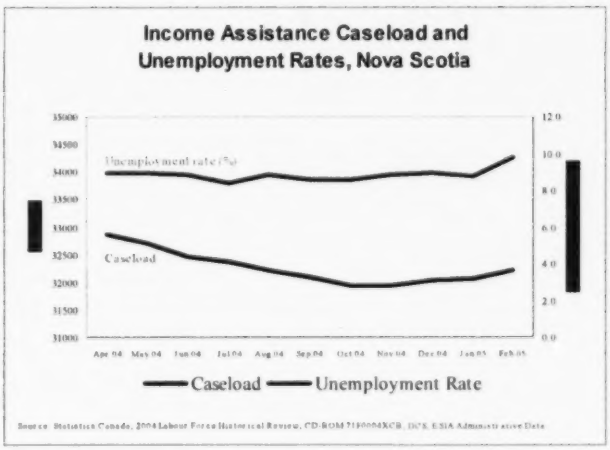
Rural/Urban Shift

Nova Scotia's population is on the move. Areas experiencing growth as a result of intra-provincial migration include Halifax, Kings, Hants, Colchester, and Lunenburg counties.[4] Other areas of the province are experiencing population declines, as people of all age groups move closer to the more urban centers of the province.

This rural/urban shift will continue to present multiple challenges for the social service system. In the Halifax metropolitan area there is pressure to expand services, while in other areas of the province there is pressure from both the community and service provider organizations to maintain existing service levels despite population declines.

Disparities in Economic Activity

Although the Nova Scotia economy is growing and projections show this growth will continue, there are some areas of concern. The rate of youth unemployment (15-24) is at least twice that of workers 25 years and older at 20.1%.[5] In addition, the unemployment rate in rural Nova Scotia has been consistently higher than the Halifax region over the past 10 years.



As the accompanying chart shows, in addition to seasonal trends, there is also a direct relationship between employment and the demands on programs such as Income Assistance.

Fewer people require income assistance during periods of economic growth. On the other hand, when the unemployment rate increases, so does the demand on income assistance programs. Higher rates of unemployment, fewer household resources, and lower incomes can increase the risk of economic and social exclusion and contribute to poor health and well-being, all of which contribute to demands on the social service system.

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[4] Cited in *Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia*, Statistics Canada.E-Stat(2002). 2001Census of Population http://estat.statcan.ca/cgi-win/CNSMCGI.EXE?ESTATFILE=Estat|English|E-Main.htm

[5] NS Department of Finance, Employment Characteristics. http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/statistics/agency/index.asp?p=4&s=4c

Incidence of Low-Income

Like the rest of Atlantic Canada, incomes in Nova Scotia remain below the Canadian average. In 2002, the average household income in Nova Scotia was $50,678 compared to the Canadian average of $ 60,699.[6]

At the same time, the percentage of the population living in low-income situations is 10.7%, down from 13.1% in 1997. The number of children living in low-income families was 26,000 in 2001, down from 38,000 in 1997.

People living in low-income situations, especially families with children, often feel they have little discretion to make healthy lifestyle choices, participate in their communities or improve their economic and social status. When circumstances change, the social service system is often the only avenue of help available.

Housing

Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of home ownership in the country, almost 71% compared with the national average of 63%, and some of the oldest housing stock. Almost 70% of homes in Nova Scotia are at least 40 years old, with some 22%, 60 years or older.[7] Maintaining an older home can be costly. Approximately 39,000 households in Nova Scotia, or 11% of the provincial housing stock, have indicated that their homes are in need of major repairs.

Nova Scotia also has an aging population and housing needs also change with age. People can find themselves in situations where they are unable to remain in or maintain their own homes because of poor health, changing family circumstances or loss of income. As the average age of the population increases, so too will the pressure on the social housing system. During the recent consultations held by the Task Force on Aging, housing was one of the primary concerns raised by seniors.

Rental and housing prices are increasing annually, making it more difficult for low-to-modest income families to own and maintain a home or find suitable rental accommodation at reasonable prices. Of particular concern is the cost of housing in the Halifax Region and surrounding areas. Economic growth and related in-migration to urban communities are putting additional pressure on the housing and rental markets.

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[6] Statistics Canada, Survey of Household Spending in 2002, Catalogue No. 62F0031; Spending Patterns in Canada, 2002, Catalogue no. 62-2020XIE, Table 1 and 2

[7] Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Canadian Housing Observer, 2004, Dwelling by Period of Construction, Nova Scotia, 2001

Increasing Complexity of Need

The needs of people accessing the Department's programs are becoming increasingly complex. For example, a review of the Employment Support Services caseload indicates the majority of the people average six to twelve barriers to employment. Such barriers include literacy challenges; absence of marketable skills; work training or employment history; and/or life situations such as child-care issues or mental health issues. These barriers can significantly impact a person's success in the labour market. Addressing these barriers often requires multiple, long-term interventions.

In the Child Welfare program, many children in care have special needs including behavioural, emotional, physical, mental or other disorders. Most require counselling and other forms of treatment to resolve. Many placement providers report they require more timely access to clinical specialists to manage children's complex behaviours and training to manage acute behaviours.

At the same time, there is a small but significant portion of the adult disabled population requiring residential and related supports with complex needs that pose a challenge to existing policy, legislation and service systems. Gaps exist especially for people with multiple disabilities/severe challenges, requiring intensive, multiple professional supports. Finding the appropriate residential supports and other services for those who have involvement with the criminal justice system is even more difficult.

These external trends, though beyond the control of the social service system, can have a significant impact on the performance of the system.

2.2 OPPORTUNITIES

The implementation of the new *Multilateral Framework for Persons with Disabilities* in April 2004 continues to provide opportunities to strengthen Nova Scotia's labour market programs and services. This new agreement replaced *the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities* agreement and made available an additional $845,100 to Nova Scotia to support current programs and services delivered by the departments of Health, Education and Community Services. The new agreement provides more flexibility in the programs currently provided to respond to changing client needs. Over the course of this new agreement, the Department and its delivery partners will be engaging the disability community and reviewing current programs to ensure optimal effectiveness and efficiency.

Opportunities also exist to make significant improvements in the delivery of child welfare services. To date, an independent review by Deloitte & Touche has been released, and extensive dialogue held with staff, service providers and key stakeholders across the province. Information has also been gathered from written submissions and focus groups with key stakeholders. The review process highlighted several delivery components within child welfare that require improvements. In December 2004, following the establishment of a joint Community Services/Child Welfare Agencies Steering Committee, four projects were launched to make recommendations for improvements in four key service areas:

- child and youth placement services
- child protection on-call system
- coordination of foster and adoption services
- opportunities for shared services between the Province and community based Child Welfare Agencies

Appointed by the Minister, the members of Steering Committee and the related project groups share a commitment to strengthen service delivery on behalf of children and families, and ensure that the services and resources available within the child welfare system provide maximum benefit to children. Reports in each of these areas will be ready early in June 2005.

In December, an additional $2.7 million was invested in the Senior Citizens Assistance Program and the Provincial Housing Emergency Repair Program for low-income Nova Scotians. This funding will enable the Department to address the needs of approximately 1,600 people on the waiting list who currently have approved applications for these programs. Public housing units also received an investment of $4 million to make interior and exterior improvements and to install generators and elevators in seniors' buildings.

Work is proceeding on the renewal of the Community Supports for Adults program. In January 2005, the Department introduced a Direct Family Support program. This program will enable people to remain at home with their families, in their own communities. Other enhancements to the Supported Apartment Program and the Alternate Family Support program are planned for 2005-06.

In February 2005, the Department made an additional $2 million investment in the province's adult service and work activity centres. These centres provide vocational day training and work experience programs for Nova Scotians with disabilities who have barriers to employment. The one-time funding for infrastructure or capital purchases and improvements will enable the centres to continue to provide quality programs for the future.

A second call for proposals under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing agreement was issued in December 2004. The request for proposals is for the development of new affordable rental housing for singles, families, seniors and people with disabilities throughout the province. A successful response will enable the Department to continue to respond to the changing housing needs of Nova Scotians. To date, over $14.4 million has been committed for the construction or renovation of more than 300 units.

In March 2005, the Province strengthened its commitment to affordable housing with the signing of the second phase of the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing agreement. With an agreement signed for a second phase, the total investment in affordable housing options will reach $56.18 million by 2008. The investment is equally shared by the Government of Canada, and the Province of Nova Scotia and its housing partners. The second phase of the Agreement will provide the Province with greater flexibility in meeting the unique needs of low-to-moderate income Nova Scotians. This additional funding will be used to build on the success of the first

phase of the Agreement, and support the creation of new rental housing and home ownership options, and the rehabilitation or conversion of aging housing stock.

Nova Scotia children and families can also look forward to significant improvement in child-care supports over the course of the next five years. The Government of Canada, in its February 2005 budget made a substantial funding commitment to a five-year child-care plan. Funding for Nova Scotia is anticipated to be approximately $130 million over the life of the plan, representing the largest infusion of money in the history of the province's child-care system. New federal funding will compliment and enhance existing provincial investments in quality child-care, enabling the Province to maintain the flexibility it needs to respond to the changing needs of families and to improve child-care in Nova Scotia. The goal will be to work toward creating a quality child-care system that is accessible to Nova Scotia families, at an affordable cost.

3 Mission

The Department is committed to a sustainable social service system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve.

This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

The mission is underpinned by four key operating principles:

- integration
- quality service to clients
- valued employees, supportive work environment
- financial responsibility and sustainability

4 Strategic Goals

During 2004-05, the Department engaged in a strategic planning exercise, culminating in the development of a three-year strategic plan.

Six broad strategic goals were identified, to which all core business areas and corporate support services contribute. Our goals are to:

- strengthen the capacity of individuals and families to participate in their communities, achieve their full potential, and assume responsibility for addressing their own needs
- build and maintain a well managed, capable, responsive and sustainable social service system
- create an integrated, client focused, quality service delivery system
- strengthen service provider relationships and leverage opportunities for collaboration
- develop, and demonstrate leadership in the continuous pursuit of excellence
- foster a competent and committed workforce through appreciation and support for individuals and teamwork

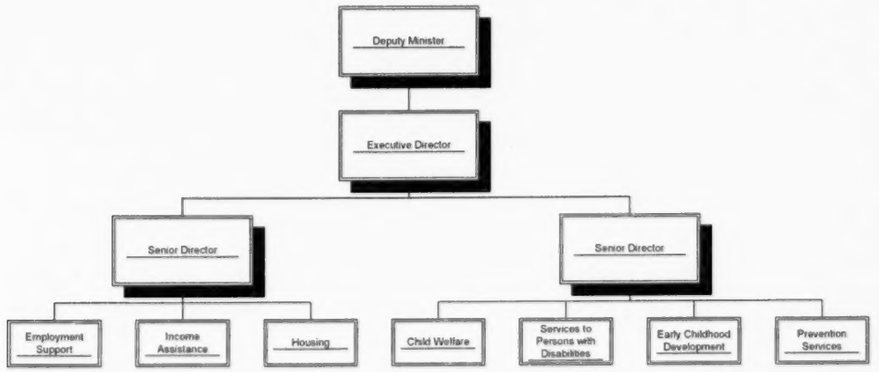
5 Core Business Areas

The programs of the Department are grouped into four core business areas:

- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Housing Services
- Family and Children's Services
- Services for Persons with Disabilities

During 2004-05, the Department completed a major restructuring initiative. A key element of the restructuring was the desire to organize the core programs of the Department to better support program integration, strengthen policy and program development, and promote efficiency and high quality services for clients.

An excerpt from the Department's organizational chart shows the new program groupings:



5.1 Employment Support and Income Assistance

The focus of Nova Scotia's Employment Support and Income Assistance Program is to help people maximize their own level of self-sufficiency. Services include:

- financial assistance to assist individuals and families in need with the cost of basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter
- financial assistance for special needs related to employability and training, such as dental care and eye glasses
- a range of employment support services, including financial assistance for special needs like child care and transportation for employment or training
- prescription drug coverage for income assistance recipients and recipients making the transition to work
- financial assistance programs to help seniors maintain their independence in their own homes
- employment assistance for persons with disabilities under the federal/provincial Labour Market Development Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMDA)
- child benefits provided through the Nova Scotia Child Benefit program (NSCB) for low income families who have children under 18 years of age

5.2 Housing Services

Housing is a basic need, fundamental to personal well-being, and the base upon which to build healthy and sustainable communities. Housing Services provides safe affordable housing to people across the province and uses its existing buildings, and technical and financial resources to support communities. The range of housing services includes:

- housing assistance programs for low to moderate income Nova Scotians to help them make repairs to their homes
- approximately 12,000 public housing units for approximately 18,500 Nova Scotians
- development of new affordable homeowner and rental housing under the Affordable Housing Program
- administration of third party agreements for approximately 9,000 cooperative and other non profit housing units
- administration of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Nova Scotia loan portfolio including approximately $180 million and $37 million in provincial-funded loans to homeowners, and to non-profit organizations

In addition, Housing Services provides space in some public housing buildings for community groups to provide services to support tenants and their communities, including parent and family resource centres, day care centres and breakfast programs for children.

5.3 Family and Children's Services

The future of Nova Scotia is based on providing safe and nurturing environments for children to develop to their full potential. Community Services provides a full range of community-based, prevention-oriented supports for both children and families, including:

- child protection services:
  - assessment of all reports of alleged child abuse and neglect
  - the provision of a range of interventions, counseling and placement services for children and youth in need of protection (i.e., foster care, adoptions and/or residential services)
- programs that support families and foster healthy child development including:
  - child care subsidies at licensed, full-day child care centres
  - financial support to non-profit child care centres to enable preschool children of low-income families to participate in a 'head start' or enriched part-day child care
  - funding to help full and part-day child care centres include children with special needs
- Early Intervention Services to help young children with special needs reach their potential including:
  - working directly with young children (0 - 6 years) and families in their homes
  - support for a variety of community outreach services including transition houses for abused women and their children, women's centers, and intervention programs for abusive men
  - coordination of community development initiatives focused on prevention of child abuse, better outcomes for children, and parent education and support through Family Resource Centres

The Department also regulates the provision of services from a range of service providers through licensing, developing standards and policies, evaluating and monitoring compliance. Child-care centres, residential child-caring facilities, and small option homes are licensed. Yearly evaluations are also completed for foster homes.

5.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities

Services for persons with disabilities is a new core business area for the Department. It brings together Community Services programs for children with disabilities and adults with disabilities under a common structure. This marks the beginning of a movement toward a continuum of support services for both children and adults, with age-appropriate services and programs. This will enable the Department to better address current barriers in the system, and strengthen overall co-ordination and delivery of services and supports.

Access to appropriate residential support services for children and adults with disabilities is an essential part of participation in the community and key to increasing independence. Services include:

- support programs for families who care for their children with physical and developmental disabilities at home through in-home support and respite care services
- a broad range of supports, including in-home, alternative family home, supported apartments, residential supports for adults with intellectual disabilities, long term mental illness and/or physical disabilities
- a variety of vocational day program supports and employment services through community-based organizations
- assessment and classification services to identify the abilities and requirements of people needing care and/or supervision, and to help them access appropriate services
- development and monitoring of standards to ensure they are met in all residential living settings that provide care and supervision for persons with disabilities.

5.5 Corporate Support Services

The delivery of the core program services is supported by:

- Communications
- Human Resources
- Finance & Administration, including budget and fiscal management, accounting and control, and administrative support services
- Program & Operations Support, including business and client services, licensing services, process improvement, revenue recovery and property services
- Policy & Information Management, including information technology, records and information management, federal/provincial relations, corporate policy and planning, research and evaluation

6 Priorities 2005-06

6.1 Employment Support & Income Assistance (ESIA)

6.1.1 Standardized Core Training Program

Quality service delivery, consistent application of policy and effective case management depend upon a coordinated and ongoing training program. The Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program is one of the largest programs of the Department, with an annual

average caseload of approximately 32,000 cases, and a budget estimate in excess of $350 million.

During the first annual *Dialogue with the Deputy Minister* sessions held in the summer 2004, ESIA staff identified the need for more focused program specific training.

In 2005-06, a standardized core training program will be developed and implemented for Employment Support and Income Assistance staff. Core modules for the training program will include interviewing skills, client service, program goals and policy, case planning and management. Dedicated training resources will be available to support this initiative.

6.1.2 Complete Employment Support Services Evaluation

The ESIA caseload is changing. Today, more clients have multiple barriers to employment, making it difficult for them to find and maintain employment. An examination of the current range of employment support services and the delivery model will help ensure that appropriate, affordable and responsive services are available to meet the changing needs of clients.

Late in 2004-05, the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to complete an evaluation of the Employment Support Services (ESS) component of the ESIA program. Though the release of the RFP took longer than originally planned, the Department is committed to evaluating the ESS program.

Proposals will be assessed early in 2005-06, with completion of the evaluation scheduled for fall 2005.

6.1.3 Income Assistance Personal Allowance Rate

The Income Assistance Personal Allowance was increased by $4 per person in 2004–05 and will continue to be assessed on a regular basis.

6.2 Housing Services

6.2.1 Continue Implementation of the Affordable Housing Program

The Government of Nova Scotia recognizes the need for affordable housing and is committed to supporting safe, appropriate, and sustainable housing for low-to-moderate income families and individuals across the Province. In Sept 2002, the Province signed the Affordable Housing Agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Under this agreement, the Province and the Government of Canada each committed to provide $18.63 million in funding for a total investment of $37.26 million.

In March 2005, the Province signed a new second phase Affordable Housing Agreement. This will result in an additional federal/provincial investment of $18.9 million, enabling the Department to continue to develop affordable housing options for Nova Scotians,

During 2005-06, the Department will continue implementation in two key areas: the creation of new rental and ownership housing; and the rehabilitation of existing owned homes and rental units at risk of being lost from the housing stock.

The goals are to increase the supply of affordable housing in Nova Scotia, ensure the housing remains affordable for at least ten years, that households occupying units are neither over or under housed, and resources are targeted where they will be most beneficial.

Specifically, the priorities for 2005-06 are to create up to 200 new rental-housing units and develop approximately 40 new owned homes. The ability to achieve these goals will depend on the response from developers who want to participate in the initiative.

The Department will also continue its efforts to preserve existing rental housing units and owned homes. The goal for 2005-06 is to preserve up to an additional 90 existing rental housing units and up to 100 existing owned homes.

6.3 Family and Children's Services

6.3.1 Early Childhood Development Initiative

In September 2000, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Social Services established the Early Childhood Development Communiqué to improve and expand early childhood development programs and services. Through this Communiqué, Nova Scotia developed its Early Childhood Development Initiative. To date, $54 million has been invested to strengthen children's programs, this is inclusive of the Early Childhood Development Initiative and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care as noted below.

Investments in 2004-05 included a "stabilization" recruitment and retention grant for early childhood staff in full-day child care facilities to help retain qualified and caring staff; an initiative to help communities develop innovative programs that promote children's early language, emergent literacy and cognitive development; grants to non-profit community-based agencies with a focus on child care information and support for parents and child care providers; a grant to family resource centres across the province to continue to provide additional parent education and support programs; and an initiative to support family resource centres in promoting greater use of volunteers.

Support for these programs and initiatives will continue in 2005-06, along with the development of a parent education framework and related training strategy to enhance accessibility to quality parent education programs offered by family resource centres across the province. An inventory

of parent education programs offered by the family resource centers will be finalized, including current catchment areas.

6.3.2 Early Learning and Child Care

The Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) announced November 2003, builds on the previous Early Childcare Development Communiqué commitments. During 2004-05, funding afforded further assistance to support inclusion of children with special needs, an allocation of 50 subsidized portable spaces, increased subsidy per diem, and a grant to educational institutions and associated programs to provide opportunities for early childhood education pre-service and in-service training; a cross-jurisdictional research and analysis of literature, practices, and existing resources was conducted pertaining to: models for broad development training, management training for executive directors, and role/responsibility of community developers.

These initiatives will be continued for 2005/06 along with the expansion of funding to assist licensed child care centers in the creation of new full-day licensed child care spaces for children under the age of six, with some preference being given to increasing the number of infant spaces.

Ministers responsible for Social Services agreed in November 2004 to work collaboratively on a shared vision and principles for early learning and child care in Canada. The 2005 Early Learning and Child Care initiatve, incorporates and expands on governments' commitments under the 2003 Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care and complements the 2000 Federal-Provincial-Territorial Early Childhood Development Communiqué.

At this time, plans are in development with investment areas being identified as the Department waits for final formalization of this funding. Investments being considered are expansion of child care spaces, increased funding to support the Child Care Subsidy Program, including revising the eligible income scale for child care subsidy, and enhancements for the recruitment, retention and training of early childhood staff.

6.3.3 Child Care Subsidy Review

One of the components of the Early Childhood Development Initiative is stabilizing and enhancing childcare and its related components. A multi-year child-care subsidy review was initiated in 2004-05. The goal of the review is to develop a program that provides as many eligible low-income families as possible with a subsidy that is supportive to families and fair to child-care centres.

An increase in child-care subsidies was announced following completion of the first phase of the review in February 2005. The new subsidy rates were developed by a working group of child-care representatives and Department of Community Services staff.

During 2005-06, the Department will continue the review, focusing on an examination funding provided to child-care centres, and a review of current income eligibility guidelines.

6.3.4 Adoption Re-Design

During 2004-05, the Department completed consultations on proposed changes to improve the domestic adoption program. The goal of adoption re-design is to ensure more children in care of the Minister have the opportunity to live in a supportive family environment.

During 2005-06, the Department will continue implementation, including the development of a new adoption manual that clarifies the roles and responsibilities for the delivery of adoption services. A pre-service curriculum for prospective adoptive applicants finalized in 2004-05 will be implemented beginning in April 2005. Additional information technology enhancements will be made to support the efficient delivery of services. Work will also begin on the development of an evaluation framework.

6.3.5 Volunteer Initiative

The Volunteer Initiative was launched as part of the Department's strategy to fulfill the Government's Blueprint commitment to "promote greater use of parent volunteers in family resource centres". The Department is working in collaboration with Family Resource Centre (FRC) representatives to promote volunteerism within the family resource centre sector and to maximize the use of volunteers in FRC's province-wide.

The initial focus for this project was to increase the number of parent volunteers; this has since been expanded to include retirees and seniors, youth, high school and post-secondary students, as well as ESIA clients with a career goal and action plan consonant that includes a volunteer role in the FRC sector.

During 2004-05, the Department established a Volunteer Initiative Working Group. The Group began by gathering baseline information with respect to current volunteer participation in Family Resource Centre activities.

During 2005-06, training and promotional materials to support the recruitment of volunteers will be rolled out, supported by a training strategy in volunteer management. The Department will also implement a process to monitor progress and develop a forum for sharing success stories, learning, celebration, and future planning.

6.3.6 Child Welfare - Placement Services Re-Design

Currently, the residential service system has duplication in mandates and gaps within the continuum of placement services for children in care. Placement services for children-in-care includes approximately 600 foster homes, six parent counselor programs and 28 residential programs. These services are delivered by 25 independent organizations, with independent

mandates leading to chronic placement pressures, despite the presence of vacancies within the residential sector.

A Placement Services Project was established in December 2004 as part of the joint Community Services/Child Welfare Agencies Service Improvement Initiative. Three other project groups were established at the same time: child protection on-call system; coordination of foster and adoption services; and opportunities for shared services.

The work of the Placement Services Project is proceeding in two phases. The first phase, to be completed by June 2005, will bring recommendations forward to the Child Welfare Steering Committee in a number of areas, including:

- an effective coordination function for placements throughout the province
- best practice models for the management of difficult behaviours
- financial policy and accountability mechanisms for service delivery
- revisions to child protection standards and policies to support appropriate family-based interventions

The Phase 2 work will address tasks requiring interdepartmental support, and report to the Joint Continuum of Care Initiative of the Departments of Health and Community Services. This work will begin in 2005-06.

6.4 Services For Persons with Disabilities

6.4.1 Community Supports for Adults Renewal Project

Community Supports for Adults (CSA) is a voluntary program that provides residential and day programs for adults with intellectual/physical disabilities or long-term mental illness. Residential services include a range of options from programs that accommodate greater independence from supported apartments to full twenty-four hour support. The goal is to provide a range of programs that support people at various stages of their development and independence.

In March 2004, the Department released a discussion paper and asked for input from the public with respect to renewing the Community Supports for Adults program. There were more than 1,700 visits to the website, and input was gathered from 200 written submissions and 50 consultation sessions held across the province. Responses highlighted a need to provide a broader range of services. As a result, program improvements will be made in several areas:

Direct Family Support

A new Direct Family Support program was introduced in January 2005, to provide financial assistance directly to people with disabilities living at home with their families. Similar to the existing Children's In-Home Support Program, implementation of this program will mean that families will continue to receive seamless services after a child turns 19 years of age. The program will continue to be phased-in in 2005-06.

Supported Apartments

The existing Supported Apartment Program, which encourages independent living, will be enhanced and expanded beginning in June 2005.

Alternate Family Support

The Alternate Family Support program will also be expanded, beginning in October 2005. It will support families who welcome a person with a disability into their homes and families.

New Assessment Tools

The Department has also been working in conjunction with the Department of Health, to develop and pilot a number of assessment tools. The results of the pilot will be reviewed early in 2005-06 with implementation of a new assessment tool to follow.

Funding

An additional $1 million has been allocated to this project for the 2005-06 fiscal year which brings the total CSA Renewal Project budget to $2 million.

6.4.2 Review of Adult Day Programs

As part of the CSA Renewal Initiative, and the Department's commitment to strengthen programs and services for persons with disabilities, in 2005-06, the Department will be conducting a review of adult day programs. This review will include an assessment of the services provided, gaps in services and recommendations to address the barriers and gaps identified.

6.4.3 Wheel Chair Recycling Demonstration Project

In 2004, the Disabled Persons Commission, in partnership with the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia, members of the Wheelchair Advisory Committee, and staff of the Department, developed a framework for a Children's Wheelchair Re-cycling Demonstration Project. The framework flows from Government's Blueprint Commitment #172, to establish such a project.

The framework was presented to the Coordinating Committee of Ministers in December 2004 and was followed by a commitment from Community Services for $500,000 to support implementation by the Abilities Foundation.

Implementation planning has begun, guided by a Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from the Department, The Abilities Foundation, the IWK, the Canadian Paraplegic Association and the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities. The project will be launched in April 2005, and will support children 18 years of age and younger who need a wheelchair.

6.5 Corporate Initiatives

6.5.1 Social Policy Framework

All Nova Scotians benefit from the Province's broad array of social programs. These include programs and services in education, health, justice, as well as those that provide for child protection and child-care, income, employment, disability and/or housing support, and those which focus on strengthening the cultural, recreational, and environmental fabric of our society. Programs like these make Nova Scotia a better place to work, play and live.

A social policy framework is key to enabling government to respond to the changing needs of Nova Scotians in a coherent and effective manner. Investment in social programming is recognized as an important building block in a strong and vibrant economy. It forges the essential link between social and economic development. A framework will provide a mechanism to ensure that social and economic policy development, planning and investments go hand-in-hand.

The development of such a framework is a multi-year initiative, requiring ongoing support and extensive collaboration among government departments, including Health, Education, Intergovernmental Affairs, Community Services, and others like Justice and the Office of Economic Development.

As a first step, the Department plans to begin some preliminary research in 2005-06. This will include the development of an overview of social policy frameworks that exist in other jurisdictions, an analysis of the related benefits and challenges, and the development of a preliminary plan to begin the creation of a social policy framework.

6.5.2 Integrated Case Management

In response to growing demands on the Department's aging computer systems, DCS has launched a multi-year *Integrated Case Management (ICM)* project to modernize systems and enable improvement in the way services are delivered to clients. The new technology will help improve work processes and workflow so staff can more easily serve their clients.

During 2004-05, the ICM Blueprint Phase was completed. This Blueprint outlines the rollout strategy for ICM in 2005-06 and beyond. In addition, new software was successfully implemented to support some of the work of Employment Support Services. This will help with employability assessment and case planning.

In 2005-06, two to three releases of improved technology supports, including supports for the children's in home support program and financial management capabilities will be undertaken.

6.5.3 Client Service Improvement

The Department is committed to quality client service delivery. Early in 2005-06, the Department will complete a redesign of its public website making it easier for people to find

information about the Department's programs and services. Additional, user-friendly information will be available, both on the website and in print form in departmental offices. Simplified, toll free telephone access to all of the Department's offices will also be available early in 2005, making it easier for the public and clients to contact the Department.

- Building on the work begun in 2004-05, the Department will be looking at ways to improve appointment scheduling for clients, providing clients with the opportunity to complete an application for service prior to meeting with a caseworker.
- A client satisfaction survey will also be developed and implemented, beginning with clients of the Employment Support and Income Assistance program. This survey will measure the level of client satisfaction with the service experience, enabling the Department to establish a benchmark and focus its efforts on areas of importance to clients.
- The Department will also be examing ways to enable clients to provide immediate feedback regarding their experience in receiving service and to offer suggestions for improvement.
- In addition, the Department will be improving its office signage, both inside and outside its offices, and looking at ways to improve the physical environment of office reception and waiting areas.

6.5.4 Human Resources

The success of the Department's programs, services, priorities and initiatives is dependent upon its employees. To that end, the Department is committed to creating a supportive work environment in which employees are valued and have opportunities to develop their full potential and to use their experience, knowledge and skills in a way that allows them to make a positive contribution to the Department's pursuit of excellence.

During 2004-05, the Department successfully implemented a number of strategic human resource initiatives including an Employee Recognition Program, Employee Orientation Program, and Individual Training and Development Plans for all staff.

For 2005-06, a number of human resource priorities have been identified:

- As part of its commitment to Occupational Health and Safety, the Department will develop and implement a work plan to support the rollout of a departmental Office Security Manual. Training will be provided for implementation in all offices across the province. The goal is to strengthen office security, ensuring the work environment is safe for staff.
- Working in partnership with the Public Service Commission as the lead, the Department will develop a Wellness Strategy suited to the needs of employees. Activities will include health promotion, lunch and learn sessions, as well a rollout of the infection control program.

- In partnership with the Public Service Commission and the Human Rights Commission, Community Services will develop a three-year Affirmative Action Plan for DCS. Key elements of the plan will be to ensure that staff continue to be trained in diversity and that selection processes reflect essential diversity sensitivities.
- The Department will also participate in a Succession Planning Pilot with the Public Service Commission.
- The Department has formed a Working Group and will be developing a coordinated action plan to address areas of improvement identified in the initial Employee Survey, as well as any additional concerns arising from the February 2005 Survey.

6.5.5 French Lanuage Initiative

In the Fall of 2004, Bill 111, the French-language Services Act, was introduced in the House of Assembly. The purpose of the Act is to provide for the delivery of French-language services by government thereby contributing to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community.

The Department is working closely with the Office of Acadian Affairs in the development of a French-language Services Plan within the Department. The Department is committed to improving and expanding upon the French-language services currently provided. Planned initiatives have been informed in part based upon the results from the Needs Assessment on Access to Provincial Services in French survey conducted in 2003. In 2005-06, the Department plans to undertake the following initiatives:

- Through the establishment of an intra-departmental French-language services committee, DCS will be examining current levels of French-language services offered and identifying potential areas for future improvement. In particular, the Department will explore the expansion of the use of French- language in Early Childhood Development, Early Learning and Child Care, and Family Violence Prevention Services.
- DCS plans to increase the amount of French-language web-based information. A portion of the information content currently on-line and new DCS web information will be translated into French language and uploaded to the DCS site.
- The Department in partnership with the Office of Acadian Affairs will also explore limited opportunities for interested staff to acquire French-language training to enhance their abilities to provide French language.

Department of Community Services

Estimated Budget Expenditures by Core Business

Core Business	Forecast 2004-2005 ($ Millions)*	Budget 2005-2006 ($ Millions)*
Income Assistance and Employment Support	**352.2**	**359.1**
Family and Children Services	**140.7**	**170.9**
Housing Services	**103.9**	**100.3**
Services for Persons with Diabilities	**168.1**	**172.6**
Administration and Support	**26.2**	**30.7**
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	**791.1**	**833.6**
Recoveries	(86.2)	(117.4)
Total Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	**704.9**	**716.2**
Salaries and Benefits	60.7	65.8
Funded Staff (FTEs)	1,084.5	1,140.5

* Per 2005-06 Estimates Book.

OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following table outlines our outcomes and performance measures. The set of measures focuses on our ongoing core business activities as well as priority areas for growth and improvement. Due to some significant program improvements that have been implemented over the past number of years, some outcomes and their measures have been updated to better reflect what we are striving to achieve, while others have been carried forward unchanged. In total, there are 16 measures for the Department's four core business areas.

Core Business Area: Services for Persons with Disabilities				
Outcome	**Measure**	**Data** **Base Year (BY)**	**Target**[8]	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
To better meet the individual support needs of clients and their families by providing them with support services at their own homes.	1. % of adult clients with disabilities receiving support services who remain at home with their families.	% clients, 19 years of age or older, who received residential support in 2005–06 (BY).	Increase the % of clients that remain at home with their families by 2007-08.	Continue, within the resources available, to implement the new Direct Family Support Program Review the early results and identify areas for improvement Develop and implement, in collaboration with the Regions, a reporting mechanism for tracking and monitoring the number of clients in the Direct Family Support Program.

[8] In this table, targets should be looked at with respect to the base year (BY).

7 BUDGET CONTEXT

Department of Community Services

Estimated Budget Expenditures by Core Business

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[5] In this table, targets should be looked at with respect to the base year (BY).

Core Business Area: Family and Children Services				
Outcome	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Stable placement for children in care.	2. # of children in permanent care and custody placed for adoption (agency adoption).	2003-04 (BY): 118 children 2002-03: 90 children	Increase the number of adoptions of children in Permanent Care and Custody.	Implement changes to the domestic adoption services delivery including: mandatory training for applicants, IT enhancements, team work for improved service delivery and a communications strategy to increase public awareness. Examine the barriers to adoption and foster care project: increase client access to adoption and foster care services by identifying agency and jurisdictional barriers to service, and preparing recommendations for improvements to services delivery. Implement Children in Care and Custody Standards, specifically emphasizing comprehensive planning for children. Reconfigure existing placement resources to provide a full continuum of care, matched to the placement needs of all youth in care. The continuum will place priority and develop child specific outcomes, with an emphasis on permanency planning for children.

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	3. Rate of children in care and custody (per 1,000 children under 19 years of age[9]).	2003-04 (BY): 4.4 children were in care and custody per 1,000 children under the age of 19. 2002-03 (BY): 4.4 children per 1,000 children under the age of 19.	Maintain at the 2003-04 base year rate, or decrease.	Implement the Children in Care and Custody Standards, specifically emphasizing comprehensive planning for children. Explore and develop alternative services to families which are currently being researched by the Services to Families – Alternatives to Placement sun-committee of the Placement Redesign Project. Such services could include family group counseling, outreach services from residential facilities, mediation, respite, family preservation and reunification, and in-home services.

[9] Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Population, Catalogue # 95FO300XCB2001006.

	4. % of children that come into care and custody of the total # of children receiving protection services.	2003-04: 5.8% (18,573 children received protection services of which 1,070 were in care and custody) 2002-03 (BY): 6.3% (16,725 children received protection services of which 1,060 were in care and custody)	2002-03 base year rate is maintained or decreased.	Prevention initiatives including parent education programs and parent resource centers to increase the ability of parents to more confidently meet their children's needs. Explore and develop alternative services to families which are currently being researched by the Services to Families – Alternatives to Placement sun-committee of the Placement Redesign Project. Such services could include family group counseling, outreach services from residential facilities, mediation, respite, family preservation and reunification, and in-home services. Development and delivery of a communications strategy to increase public awareness regarding child welfare, prevention and alternative programs.

Core Business Area: Family and Children Services				
Outcome	**Measure**	**Data** **Base Year (BY)**	**Target**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Stable, quality child care.	5. % of trained early childhood educators in licensed full-day child care centres.	April 2004: 87% (970 FTE's) April 2003 (BY): 85% (933 FTE's)	Target for 2005-06 is to maintain at 85% or higher.	Continue to monitor the implementation of training standards and provide support for training opportunities in the early childhood education field. Work with the Early Childhood Education Training Institutes to implement curricula that will be inclusive of African Nova Scotians. Provide expertise and support to Human Resource Skills Development Canada in the development of programs that would provide opportunities for African Nova Scotians.
	6. # of full-time licensed child care centres.	# Licensed Child Care Centres: April 2004 (BY): 223 centres April 2003: 197 centres	Target for 2006-07 is to increase the # of centres by 3%.	Through opportunities from Federal/ Provincial / Territorial agreements.

	7. # of spaces in full-time licensed child care centres.	# of spaces in child care centers: April 2004 (BY): 9,243 spaces April 2003: 8,439 spaces	Target 2005-06 is to increase the # of spaces by 400 or more.	Through funding from the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Childcare: Non-profit child care centers will be able to apply for Child Care Centre Expansion Grant to increase full-day child care spaces. Private child care centers will be able to apply for Child Care Centre Expansion Loan to increase full-day care spaces.

Core Business Area: Housing Services				
Outcome	**Measure**	**Data** **Base Year (BY)**	**Target**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Safe, appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing.	8. # of homes upgraded through home repair/home adaptation programs.	2003-04: 2,526 households 2002-03: 2,887 households 2001-02: 2,943 households 2000-01 (BY): 2,828 households	Increase the number of households assisted by 50.	Full implementation of the new Home Preservation Program funded under the Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement.
	9. % of public housing budget allocated to the maintenance improvement of the province's public housing.	2003-04: 22.7% 2002-03: 18.9% 2001-02: 19.4% 19.4 % 2000-01 (BY): 20.33%	Maintain at approximately 20%, or increase	Prioritize public housing capital replacement projects based on health and safety requirements.
	10. % of cooperative and non-profit housing organizations that have adequately funded reserves.	2003-04: 71% 2002-03: 71% 2001-02: 68% 2000-01 (BY): 63%	Maintain at 71% or increase	Continue to partner with the co-operative sector on training and education and on developing a co-operative network to build capacity and increase opportunities for information exchange. Work with individual co-operatives and non-profits to assist and train management.

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	10. % of cooperative and non-profit housing organizations that have adequately funded reserves.	2003-04: 71% 2002-03: 71% 2001-02: 68% 2000-01 (BY): 63%	Maintain at 71% or increase	Continue to partner with the co-operative sector on training and education and on developing a co-operative network to build capacity and increase opportunities for information exchange. Work with individual co-operatives and non-profits to assist and train management.

	11. Affordable Housing Agreement funds committed to date on creating or renovating housing units.	2003-04: Committed $1.25 Million 2002-03 (BY): Committed $750,000	Fully commit all $37.26 Million available under the Agreement by March 31, 2006.	Implement the Canada Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement through partnerships with community-based organizations, municipalities and the private sector to create or renovate housing units.

Core Business Area: Income Assistance and Employment Support				
Outcome	**Measure**	**Data Base Year (BY)**	**Target**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Self-sufficient individuals and families.	12. # of people receiving income assistance.	2003-04: 32,978 (Mar/04) 2002-03 (BY): 33,262 (Mar/03)	# of people receiving income assistance is maintained at or below the 2002-03 base year level.	Complete the evaluation of the Employment Support Services component of the ESIA Program to ensure current programs and delivery is meeting the needs of clients. Undertake assessments of all new cases to determine employment-readiness/ barriers. Target Wage Subsidy, Job Development, and Employment Readiness programs Partner with Work Activity programs and other Community based employment programs to provide services to income assistance recipients. Continue to partner with the Dept. of
	13. % of income assistance recipients involved in Employment Support Services who have secured full or part-time employment.	2003-04 (BY): 25% (Mar/04) 2002-03 31% (Mar/03)	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	

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	13. % of income assistance recipients involved in Employment Support Services who have secured full or part-time employment.	2003-04 (BY): 25% (Mar/04) 2002-03 31% (Mar/03)	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	

	14. % of income assistance recipients, who upon employability assessment, are supported to attend an educational program.	2003-04 (BY): 43% (Mar 04) 2002-03: 43% (Mar/03) 2001-02: 43% (Mar/02)	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	Education, supporting the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning to ensure income assistance recipients have an opportunity to complete the adult high school diploma. Working with the Skill Development Agreement to deliver the Educate to Work program. Ensure parents have access to subsidized child care support. Provide prescription drug coverage (Pharmacare) to recipients leaving income assistance for work for up to one year to enable people to maintain employment. Improving information exchange with our federal and provincial counterparts to ensure clients are aware of the benefits available from other sources such as Canada Pension Plan, Workers Compensation Board and Canada Revenue Agency. Coordinate with Integrated Case Management (ICM) to develop an integrated case management system for program areas.
	15. % of total income assistance cases with wage income.	2003-04 (BY): 10% (Jan/04)	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	
	16. Income assistance as a % of total monthly income.	2003-04: 68% (Jan/04) 2002-03: 69% (Jan/03) 2001-02: 73% (Jan/02) 2000-01 (BY): 70% (Jan/01)	Decrease annually by 1%.	